

Abraham Lincoln and Music

Song Lyrics

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



[Written for The Sunday Journal. Copyright, 1899.]

NO AMERICAN has been the subject of so many poetical and musical effusions as Abraham Lincoln. His lowly origin, quaint personality, sterling integrity, lofty patriotism and tragic death after one of the most stormy periods in the country's history have all presented a most tempting field for writers and composers. The result of their work forms one of the most interesting chapters in the life of this remarkable man. Verse-makers, song writers and musical composers were particularly active in depicting various points in his career, and their publications are highly prized by admirers of the war president.

As soon as Lincoln's nomination was announced in 1860 song writers, verse-makers and musical composers in every part of the country hastened to turn out their effusions. Such men as Whittier, Lowell, Bryant and Greeley also took a hand in producing more dignified verses. George W. Bungay, author of the remarkable poem known as "The Bells," was one of the first in the field. Rhymsters had difficulty in meeting the name Lincoln, but Bungay solved the problem in a fashion. He wrote what he called "The Bobolink Campaign Song," in which Lincoln was made to rhyme with the words drink-on, clink-on and think-on. He wrote two songs to the air of "Yankee Doodle," one of which he called "National Cement," which had reference to the sinking ship of state and the ability of the tall man from the west to stop the leakage in the chest. Another curious production by an anonymous author was called "Abe of Illinois," who was thus described:

Our hero once was short of pence,
An humble farmer's boy.
We know he'll teach us how to fence—
Old Abe of Illinois.
To fence the Union all around
He'll work; he will not toy.
The cause is earnest and profound
For Abe of Illinois!

"Brave Old Abe" was the name of a song by W. Cutter to the time of "Auld Lang Syne." It contained these lines:

Old Abe, they say, is not genteel—
He wears a slouching hat—
But, with a heart of steel,
He's none the worse for that.
For brave Old Abe, my boy!
For brave Old Abe!
As true as steel, with a heart to feel,
Is brave Old Abe!

Edmund C. Stedman appeared early in the campaign with a popular song which he called "Honest Abe of the West." It was sung to the air of "Star

Spangled Banner." The closing lines of the four verses were:

And where battle is thickest we follow the crest
Of gallant Old Abe, Honest Abe, of the west!
So forward the flag! Leave to heaven the rest
And trust in Old Abe, Honest Abe, of the west!
Hurrah for our cause, of all causes the best!
Hurrah for Old Abe, Honest Abe, of the west!

One writer published what he called "Rallying Song," each verse closing with:

With Lincoln and Hamlin
We'll conquer or die!

Another wrote "Our Flag Is There," in which we were told:

Free speech, free labor and free soil,
Lincoln and right unrolled,
Are mottoed there for freedom's host
On every shining fold.

Scores of other songs appeared dwelling on the Republican nominee in this fashion:

They'll find what, by felling and mauling,
Our railmaker statesman can do,
For the people everywhere are calling
For Lincoln and liberty too!

With Lincoln and Hamlin we've nothing
to fear.
The victory's certain, the victory's near!

Old Abe can maul or he can thrash.
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!
Abe is not rich in worldly goods.
Oh, no; oh, no; oh, no!

Abe is the man, an honest man—
He is the man for me!

Old Abe is made of genuine stuff, the sort
that never fails.
For cabinet work he's good enough—first
rate for splitting rails.
The flatboat Abe can navigate—at that
he's tried his hand—
And now the good old ship of state we'll
trust to his command!

Abe Lincoln will be president in a few
days—few days!
To him the people will present Buchan-
an's present home.

Then shout for Abe of Illinois for a few
days—few days!
For Hamlin, too, your lungs employ,
For they shan't stay at home!
The fourth of March will soon be here—
The time for Honest Abe is near!

Early in the campaign Ditson published "The Rail Splitter's Polka, Dedicated to the Republican Presidential Candidate, Composed by A. Neuman." Then came a Philadelphia firm with "The Lincoln Quickstep," which bore a fine portrait of Lincoln, with the inscription, "Dedicated to Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States." The president's early career was thus referred to on the title page:

Honest Old Abe has split many a rail,
He is up to his work, and he'll surely not
fail,
He has guided his flatboat through many
a strait
And watchful he'll prove at the helm of
state.

A music publishing firm in Buffalo

produced after Lincoln's nomination in 1860 a piece of music the title page of which bears a fine profile of Lincoln with his autograph and the title "Honest Old Abe" at the top. The music was by "A Wide Awake" and the words by D. Wentworth, who thus described the campaign then in progress:

Ye Democrats, list to my story; ye Douglasites, all give me heed!
Though your candidate's running for glory, he's not making very good speed,
But out on the wide open prairie a tall Sucker has taken the course,

He fought in all the battles won and shed his blood freely,
But he's fought them with The Tribune, and his name is General Greeley.

The call for 300,000 troops was also recognized by the well known Wood's minstrels of New York, who had published a song and chorus to commemorate the event which they called "Hold on, Abraham, Uncle Sam's Boys Are Coming Right Along!" The introductory lines read:

We're going down to Dixie, to Dixie, to Dixie!

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift fleeting meteor, a fast flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to the rest in the grave!
The leaves of the oak and the willows shall fade,
Be scattered around and together be laid,
And the young and the old, and the low and the high
Shall molder to dust and together shall die.

A. Sedgwick and George C. Pearson's

Who will wind up the race in a hurry and distance your stubby tailed horse.
Then hurrah for Honest Old Abe, boys, for Honest Old Abe of the west!
He will wind up the race in a hurry and distance the bravest and best.

Of all the music relating to Lincoln, that known as "We Are Coming, Father Abraham, Three Hundred Thousand More," found the widest circulation and became the most popular. It appeared shortly after the president's call for 300,000 volunteers in 1862. The author of the lines was John S. Gibbons, a writer on financial topics, who had dabbled in verse, and the lines were first printed in the New York Evening Post of July 16, 1862. It was set to music by the famous Hutchinson family, who sang it with great effect. P. S. Gilmore, Stephen C. Foster, Baker and many other composers set the words to music, and the song made the greatest hit of the day. Lincoln himself was forced by a party of visitors to the White House one day in 1864 to listen to the opening verse, which read:

We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more,
From Mississippi's winding stream and from New England's shore.
We leave our plows and workshops, our wives and children dear,
With hearts too full for utterance, with but a silent tear.
We dare not look behind us, but steadfastly before.

We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more!

Other composers of music and verse, taking the lines as a basis to emphasize the promptness in responding to the president's call, published various similar songs, in which they substituted for "three hundred thousand" the words "six hundred thousand," "nine hundred thousand" and even "ten hundred thousand."

The popularity of "Father Abraham" led to its being burlesqued by the Bryant minstrel troupe and also by Mrs. John Wood, who sang it in the grand fairy extravaganza known as "The Fair One With Golden Locks." The title page bears facsimiles of two greenbacks in colors, and the song was given the title "How Are You, Greenbacks?" A large issue of greenbacks had just been made by the government, and the incident was thus commemorated in verse:

We're coming, Father Abraham, one hundred thousand more,
Five hundred presses printing us from noon till night is o'er.
Like magic you will see us start and scatter through the land
To pay the soldiers or release the border contraband.
With our promise to pay, how are you, Secretary Chase?
Promise to pay, oh, dat's what's de matter!
We're coming, Father Abraham, nine hundred thousand more,
With the greatest fighting hero that lives upon our shore.

We're going down to Dixie to fight for the dear old flag.

And should we fall in Dixie, in Dixie, in Dixie,

And should we fall in Dixie we'll die for the dear old flag.

Hold on, Abraham; never say die to your Uncle Sam.

Uncle Sam's boys are coming right along, six hundred thousand strong!

"Uncle Abraham, Bully For You!" was the title of a song and chorus issued shortly after Lincoln's preliminary emancipation proclamation. Its author was G. R. Lampard of Chicago. Its popularity was immediate, and it was often heard in the soldiers' camps. It opened with the words, "Ho, the Glorious Proclamation!" and closed with the chorus:

Give 'em Jesse, Uncle Abraham, put the rebel scoundrels through!
Hear the nation shout the chorus, Uncle Abraham, bully for you!

S. Fillmore Bennett, not to be outdone, followed with a song which J. P. Webster set to music. It was called "Old Abe Has Gone and Did It, Boys!" and was in this style:

Oh, ye niggers, come along, for I'ze gwine to sing a song.

An I warn you dat you keep it mighty still!

But dis daky hear dem say, his own self, de berry day,

Dat Old Abe had went an gone an sign de bill.

He y hallelujerum!

In the campaign between Lincoln and McClellan, a song was written by J. W. Tarbox entitled "Old Abe, They Said, Was an Honest Man." F. Lafayette set it to music. It was dedicated to the McClellan Union clubs and sung at the great McClellan Union meeting at Union square, New York. The opening stanza reads:

Old Abe, they said, was an honest man, but we can't see it like a Republican.
He's very tall without his boots; he couldn't live without cracking jokes.
At night he went to Washington, with a long tall coat and a Scotch cap on.
We are going to see the fun, we are going to look on a very tall race from Washington—

Performed by A. Lincoln.

When it transpired that Lincoln's favorite poem was that known as "Oh, Why Should the Spirit of Mortal Be Proud?" numerous musical composers hastened to set the words to music. The poem up to that time was but little known except to inner literary circles, and there was much curiosity to secure a copy of the verses. Lincoln himself was unable to tell the name of the author, which, since his death, has been ascertained. Frank B. Carpenter, the artist, took down the words from Lincoln's lips, and in his "Inner Life of Lincoln" gives an interesting account of the president's admiration for the poem, which is composed of 46 lines and was written by William Knox, a Scotchman. The first verse reads:

music to the words is prized by collectors, the former's being "Inscribed to the American Nation."

During the third year of Lincoln's term there appeared a piece of music called "That's What's the Matter With the Purps." These words were displayed in bold, large, ornamental characters, accompanied by a cut of a grinning daky with outstretched arms and legs. A dog is tugging at each leg. One bears the head of Lincoln and the other of Jeff Davis. The claws of both dogs are holding the negro firmly. One verse of the song explains the cause of the contention in these words:

I tell yoh what it is—I'ze at de bottom ob de fuss.

Dat's what I told yoh was de matter wid de purps.

Massa Abe he did de conscript try, but found it wouldn't do.

New York raised de bloody cry wid de hoop-de-do'n-doo!

"We'll Fight For Uncle Abe" was the title of a very popular plantation song and chorus sung with great success by C. Pettengill at the concerts of the Buckley Serenader minstrels. The melody was by J. K. Campbell and arranged by Fred Buckley. One of the verses read:

The Yankee boys are starting out the Union for to sabe,
And we're going to Washington to fight for Uncle Abe.

They say that recognition will the rebel country sabe.

But Johnny Bull and Mr. France are 'fraid of Uncle Abe!

The news of Lincoln's assassination led to the composition of more musical productions than were ever undertaken in this country in honor of any one man. Here is a partial list, with copy of the title pages:

"Abraham Lincoln's Funeral March, Dedicated to the People of the United States. Composed by W. J. Robjohn." The title page is the finest of any on the subject. It bears a fine lithograph reproduction of Brady's famous Lincoln portrait surrounded by flags, flowers and mourning drapery.

"President Lincoln's Funeral March, Composed by E. Mack, Respectfully Dedicated to the People of the United States." A woodcut profile portrait appears in the center of the page.

"The National Funeral March, In Honor of President Abraham Lincoln, Composed by C. Everest."

"Funeral March, Performed at the Funeral of Abraham Lincoln, Music by Donizetti," published in Boston.

"Lincoln's Funeral March, Composed and Dedicated to the Memory of the Pure and Noble Patriot Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the U. S., by E. C. Davis." The title page and those following are surrounded by heavy black borders.

"Funeral March, to the Memory of Abraham Lincoln, the Martyr President of the United States, Who Died April

Sept. 22, 1936.

Dear Little Cabin.
(Cradle Song)

Dear little cabin stands high on the hill
Sheltered its loved one who worked with a will
Dear little cabin was home-sweet-home
To all when the days work was done.

Refrain

Bye bye oh baby, bye baby boy.
Bye bye oh baby, bye baby boy.

2.

One little window let in the sun bright,
One little window shed forth candle-light,
One little door that opened wide,
A welcome to travelers with pride.

Refrain.

3.

One sturdy chimney to waft up the smoke,
From the warm fireside where love often spoke.
Nancy sat rocking her dear baby boy
Abraham her pride and her joy.

Refrain

4.

No more on its roof will the rain ever fall,
No more from its door will be heard that sweet call.
Covered with granite, and made a world-shrine
Dear Little Cabin Sublime.

Refrain.

Mrs. Nettie Edna Kinnick Laggner.

July 1970

Rare Sheet Music — "The Abe-iad"

The rarest piece of Lincoln sheet music is to be found at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee. A less desirable copy (margins trimmed) is in the Library of Congress. The title is *The Abe-iad* published by John H. Parrott in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1861, with words by J. P. McRebel. Perhaps it was published too early to be classified as a Confederate imprint, as it does not appear in the compilations of Crandall and Harwell. The theme deals with the Baltimore assassination plot.

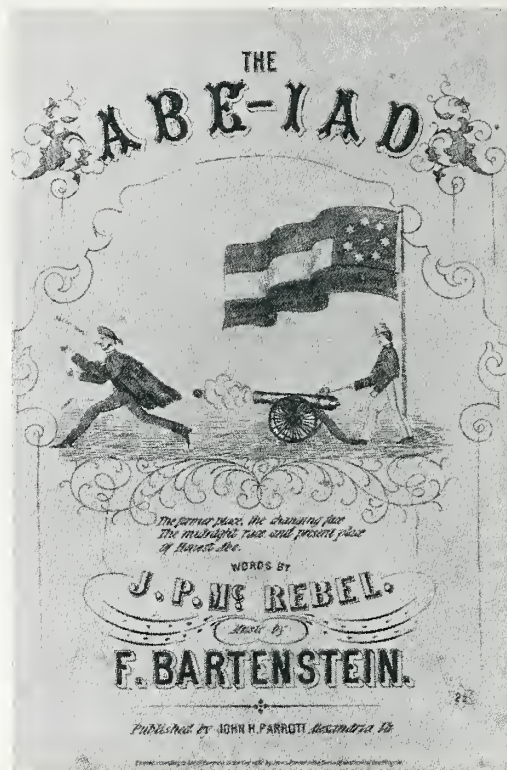
The Sixteenth President was hardly ever referred to in music bearing a genuine Confederate imprint, a courtesy that Northern music publishers could not boast — as to Jefferson Davis. Even though *The Abe-iad* may or may not bear a Confederate imprint, it is a major rarity.

The title cover is illustrated, a quality few Confederate pieces afforded. The cartoon illustration depicts Lincoln wearing a military cape and a Scotch cap (See *Lincoln Lore* Number 1424), Lincoln's alleged disguise when he passed through Baltimore, Maryland, en route to Washington, D. C. to be inaugurated President. The cartoon shows Lincoln fleeing before a Confederate soldier who is in the act of firing a cannon at him. Lincoln says, while the cannon-ball is in midair, "Catch who." The soldier stands beneath the stars and bars, and on the Lincoln Memorial University copy the colors of the flag have been hand painted. Under the cartoon is the following statement:

The former place, the changing face
The Midnight race, and present place
of Honest Abe.

The five verses of *The Abe-iad* follow:

Abe Lincoln, was a citizen of very small
renown,
A railing abolitioner, of little Springfield
town;
Abe's party said, "November comes, now Abe,
don't let us fail
To meet the other parties all, and beat them
with a rail!"
November came, the rogues turned out, and
yet, 'twas not allow'd
That Abe should come, lest Abram's face,
should fright away the crowd!
So Abram at his Springfield home,
staid waiting for the news,
The while, his party licked their
chops, at smell of public stew;
Soon hordes of every grade and
shape, high, low, and ragged feller!
Came for each place, from chair of
state, to toting Abe's umbreller!
So Abram, left, and foolish speech,
and maudlin kiss and shout
Of flattering rabble, well composed,
the triumph of his route.
At length, a man full hard he ran —
"A plot, a plot!" did yell,
Then quick beneath each seat they
sought infernal bursting shell;
The man, they tried (and forth he
lied) "The special train," he said,
"Will be upset, and if Abe 'scapes,
arm'd men will shoot him dead!"
Abe's friends a counter plot did hatch,
'twas, "Run Abe Lincoln straight —
For running was a strategem, of
Bonaparte the Great!"
Away went Abram, nech or naught, all
in the midnight dark.
Away went Abram, fast he flew! no
judge *that* time could mark
And dreading still, Grimalkin's corpse,
or brick bats envious blow,
At dead of night, he slyly passed thro'
dreadful Baltimo'!
So Abe stole into Washington (alas
the woeful day)
And fondly thought, poor foolish Abe!
"Well four years here I'll stay!"



From the Lincoln Memorial University Collection

Only one other copy of "The Abe-iad" is known to collectors. This piece was taken from an album and was presented to M. F. Savage by a friend in the South.

Abe' human hopes are sandy ropes;
to my advice give heed!
And dearly prize those lengthy limbs,
which give you wondrous speed!
Repent and change! or as you came,
soon darkly back you'll run;
Aye! day and night, with all your
might, you'll run from sun to sun!
Then let us say, make haste the day!
and Abram, make haste he!
And when old Abe, shall run that
race, I may be there to see!

The Abe-iad is a part of the largest Lincoln sheet music collection numbering over five hundred different items (some titles will bear six or seven different imprints) which is to be found at Lincoln Memorial University.

Nearly all Lincoln collections, private or institutional, have some sheet music pertaining to the Sixteenth President. For cataloguing, the following categories can be set up:

1. Lincoln theme
2. Dedication
3. Portrait on cover
4. Mentioned in lyric
5. Immediate collateral interest

The Lincoln Memorial University sheet music collection has been gathered over a period of years with an occasional title added from time to time. Then, too, certain acquisitions bear the names of Friedman, Wessen and Bosler as donors of sizeable collections. However, a windfall of Lincoln and collateral sheet music came to the college in June 1951, with the acquisition of 735 titles known as the M. F. Savage Collection, a gift of Stanley H. Byram of Martinsville, Indiana. (See *Lincoln Herald*, Fall 1951, pages 38 to 40).

Incidentally, Lincoln Memorial University has the fifth largest collection of sheet music bearing a Confederate imprint.

Different Reasons Why People Attend Church.

Some go to Church to just for a walk
Some go there to laugh and talk
Some go there for observation
Some go there for speculation
Some go there to meet a friend
Some go there their time to spend
Some the impulse now discover
Some go there to meet a lover
Some go there to sleep and nod
And some go there to worship God.

Hard Times Come Again No More.

While we seek mirth and beauty & music light and gay
There are frail forms fainting at the door
Though their voices are silent, their pleading looks will say
O! hard times come again no more.

(Chorus) 'Tis the song the sigh of the weary
Hard times, hard times come again no more
Many days you have lingered around my cabin door
O! hard times come again no more.

The Lawyer leads a harassed life
Much like the hunted Otter,
And 'twixt his own and others strife
He's always in hot water
Fear foe or friend a cause defend
However wrong, must he see
In reason's spite maintain its right
And dearly earn his fee see
Repeat,

The Doctor's styled a gentleman
But this I hold but humming
For like a tavern waiting man
To every call he's coming
Now here, now there must he repair
Or starve see by denying
Like death himself unhappy elf
He lives by others dying.
Repeat,

A Farmer's life then let me live
Obtaining while I need it
Enough for self and some to give
To such poor souls as need it
I'll drain & fence, or drudge expense
To give my land good dressing
I'll plough or sow, or drill in row
And hope from Heaven a blessing.
Repeat,

When Beecher was in Europe he told them we'd fight-
Till Rebellion was crushed out and the land was made free
And Europe all combined could not turn us from the right-
And his earnest prayer was "so mote it be"
Chorus

The work goes bravely on and victory will be ours
Rebellion we will conquer, defy all foreign powers
This country shall be free, with to our flag be true
And our Rooster we will always crow Yankee Doodle Do.
Chorus.

Farmers Blue.

A Farmers life is the life for me
I own I love it dearly
And every season full of glee
I take its labor cheerly
To plough or sow, to reap or mow
Or in the barn to thresh or
All's one to me I plainly see
'Twill bring me health and cash too,
Repeat 1st 2^d lines.

Hoist Up The Flag.

Down as South Carolina the war first-began

When Sumpter was bombarded with her noble garrison
Who stood by the flag with hearts, brave, and true
And fought like men for the Red, White, and Blue,

Chorus

Secession then did show its long covered head

As State after State were captured by its lead
And Floyd had stole our guns and ammunition too
In the face of James Buchanan a booby, booby, too.

Chorus

Then Uncle Abram Lincoln America's noblest son

Left off his splitting rails and moved to Washington
He told the Sister States; Justice to each he'd give
If they'd consent once more in harmony to live

Chorus.

But Dixie was uneasy and resolved to have a fight-

They could not whip the Yankees though they tried with all their might-
They called for foreign aid which was given by a few
Who smuggled guns and powder which the Russians would not do

Chorus.

Old Dixie Must Surrender.

Old Dixie must surrender
To the Red, White and Blue,
Jeff Davis can't defend her
Against Yankee Double Deuce.
Chorus) Hold on Abraham,
Never say die to your Uncle Sam,
Uncle Sam's boys are coming right-along
Six Hundred Thousand strong.

Rebellion is a warning
All through the sunny South
Jeff's subjects are complaining
And he can't stop their mouths
Chorus.

He cries in vain for Europe,
To raise the big blockades,
He'll offer them King Cotton
And with the South free trade
Chorus.

Old England she has waked up
And dreamed she saw the smoke
Of a little Yankee monstrous
By which her back was broke.
Chorus.

Jeff has a fiendish Napoleon
A whiskered mustached rat
He sawed a hole in Mexico
But will drive him out of that.
Chorus.

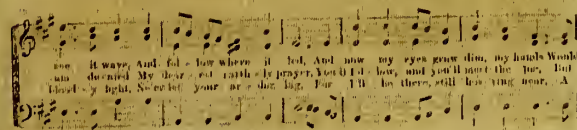
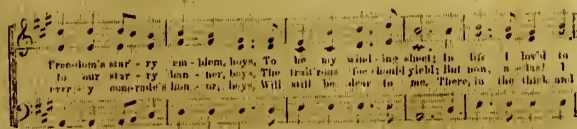
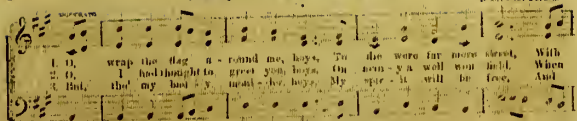
We say now to all Nations
Keep from your rebel sails,
Or you'll offend Uncle Abam
And then he'll split your sails.
Chorus.



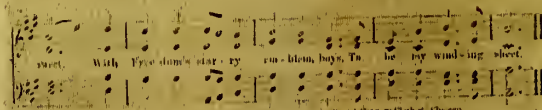
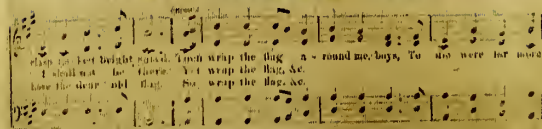
A PICTURE TAKEN ABOUT 1900 OF ROBERT STEWART TAYLOR,
(At Left), of Fort Wayne, Composer of Song, "O, Wrap the Flag Around Me, Boys,"
Which Was Played by a Band at Lincoln's Funeral.

"O, Wrap the Flag around me, Boys."

B. STEWART TAYLOR.

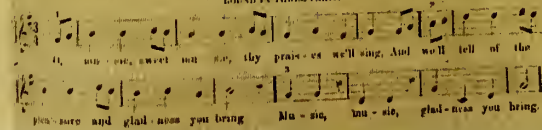


"O, Wrap the Flag around me, Boys."—CONCLUDED



"O, Music, Sweet Music."

ROUND IN THREE PARTS.



ROBERT STEWART TAYLOR'S POPULAR CIVIL WAR SONG
Was Included in a Song Book, "The Silver Lute," Published in 1862.

but

